



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **CHILD CARE AGENCIES TRANSPORTING CHILDREN PUT ON ALERT**

### *DEPARTMENT INCREASES INSPECTIONS AS WARM WEATHER SETS IN*

NASHVILLE-- As the weather gets warmer, Tennesseeans must make an extra effort to protect children from the heat. Since 1997, four Memphis children have lost their lives after being forgotten in their child care vans. Last year in Nashville, a little boy was left in his mother's personal vehicle in front of his day care center. He, too, died from severe heat exposure. Across the country, a record 42 children died after being trapped in hot vehicles in 2003.

"Children who are transported to and from child care agencies are especially at risk," said Human Services Commissioner Gina Lodge. "We must all work together to stop these preventable tragedies."

Extreme temperatures cause many health risks for children such as: sunburn, heatstroke, dehydration, brain damage, and even death. When left in a hot vehicle, a young child's core body temperature may increase three to five times faster than that of an adult. A recent study showed that even on a 73-degree day, a dark sedan reached 100 degrees after 15 minutes and 110 degrees at 30 minutes.

Child care agencies are receiving letters this week reminding them of the potential dangers that are involved while transporting children.

"Agencies need to take extra precautions as the weather gets warmer, and our staff will be watching," said Lodge. "Licensing counselors are beginning stepped-up enforcement of all agencies that provide transportation. Surveillance of licensed child care agencies and extra unannounced inspections over the hot summer months are planned. Violations of safety regulations will result in civil penalties and denial, suspension, or revocation of transportation and/or an agency's child care licenses."

During a two-week period last July, Human Services found serious transportation violations at 91 different agencies statewide. As a result, 12 child care agencies voluntarily suspended their transportation licenses. One agency's transportation license was suspended by a departmental order.

If you witness a child being left unattended in a child care vehicle, dial 911 for immediate assistance. For other transportation safety violations please call the Human Services Child Care Complaint Hotline at 1-800-462-8261--that's 1-800-GO2VAN1 (Go to the back of the van and check the children--it's the number one priority). For more information on child care licensing visit <http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/childcare.htm>.

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